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# Developing Automatic Word Recognition: The Foundation of Fluent Reading

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# Overview

## 1. A little bit of theory

What IS automatic word recognition?

Why is it important?

## 2. Implementation

How do you teach children words?

When do you do it?

Which words?

## 3. Questions



# Read this passage

Four menny reedurs, compreahenshun suphrz  
knot beecuz thu reedurz hav insuphishint  
cognuhtiv reasorsays two mayck meening owt of  
thu teckst red, butt beecuz thay deapleatud  
thoughz reasorsays buy having too emploi them  
in werd reckognishun.

Apologies to Timothy Rasinski and *The Reading Teacher*, 65(8) 516-522 . Why reading fluency should be hot!



# Now try it

“For many readers, comprehension while reading suffers not because the readers have insufficient cognitive resources to make meaning out of the text read, but because they depleted those resources by having to employ them in word recognition” (Rasinski, 2012, p. 517).



# More from Rasinski

“These are the same readers who would easily understand a text if it were read to them—when someone else takes on the task of decoding the words, they can employ their cognitive resources to making meaning” (Rasinski, 2012, p. 517).



# Principle of automaticity

When you do something

- (a) Effortlessly and without conscious thought—  
with little to no conscious attention
- (b) Obligatory processing







# Stroop Effect

YELLOW BLUE ORANGE  
BLACK RED GREEN  
PURPLE YELLOW RED  
ORANGE GREEN BLUE  
BLUE RED PURPLE  
YELLOW RED GREEN

Say the name of the color of the letters in each word



# Principle of automaticity

When you do something

- (a) Effortlessly and without conscious thought—  
with little to no conscious attention
- (b) Obligatory processing



# Automatic Word Recognition

- Instantaneous recognition of a word as a whole unit
- Recognized -----on sight—SIGHT WORDS
- Skilled readers automatically recognize nearly all the words they encounter automatically



# Why is automatic word recognition critical?

- Limited attentional capacity
- $7 \pm 2$  bits – working memory
- Reader cannot focus on meaning (comprehend) when all attention used for decoding
- **Automatic word recognition frees capacity for comprehension**



# Why is automatic word recognition critical?

- Fluency and comprehension depend on automatic word recognition



# Teaching Words to Automaticity

## Jan Richardson's Big 5

1. Say and/or spell the word
2. What's missing
3. Mix & Fix magnetic letters
4. Table writing—articulate word slowly while writing
5. Write on the white board

Takes place immediately after discussion in Guided Reading



# Your turn

- Take turns as teacher & students
- Teacher

Write your word on the whiteboard.

Say: This is the word \_\_\_\_\_

Say: What is this word?

Say: Spell it

Play what's missing

Ask pupils to mix & fix and check the word

Ensure they are checking correctly



# More Ways to Teach Words

## Image the Word

Especially critical for weak word readers & weak spellers



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# said



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# More ways to work on words

Window card

Point to word



# Window Card



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# Even more ways

- Word bingo
- My pile/your pile
- Highlight word in printed text
- Word card
- Word bank



# When extra work is needed

## Attention-grabbing

- Water pen on chalkboard
- Color changing markers

## Adding kinesthetic element

- Trace in salt or sand
- Write word on index card with puffy paint or glitter glue; student traces and says
- Word in sandpaper letters



# Which Words?

- Use assessment—
- Keep track of which words children know
- Sight word review writing—
  - First activity in Richardson lesson plan Emergent & Early readers



## High-Frequency Word Chart, Option 2

This chart lists words that would be appropriate to teach at levels A, B, and C. There is no sequence for introducing sight words. Select a word that appears in the book, and put a check (✓) each time the student writes the word without support.

Level A (1)	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
am						
at						
can						
go						
is						
me						
my						
see						
the						
to						
up						
we						
<b>Level B (2)</b>						
and						
do						
got						
had						

From: Richardson, Jan. *Next Step in Guided Reading in Action*. Scholastic.

Also in *The Next Step in Guided Reading, K-2*. Scholastic



# Selecting Words to Teach

- High frequency, high utility
- Link to reading & writing
  - Choose texts **for** word learning
  - Guided writing with same word





# Your turn

- Work with your partner or group
- Examine the assessment data & choice of texts for your hypothetical guided reading group
- Select 1 word for sight word learning and 1 book for your guided reading group



# Questions?



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# Thank you for coming!

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